

Submitted by Robin L Bergman, Precinct 12

Town Meeting: Article 12:

Letter to the Town of Arlington and Arlington Town Meeting Members:

As proponents working on the Article 12 Substitute Motion, we have brought you the science and the [scientists](#). We have presented you with many resources including a growing [list](#) of articles, forums and studies, a [website](#) and a [facebook page](#) dedicated to these issues and we plan to keep them current.

This will explain why I decided to work on this warrant article and substitute motion and why it is so important to me. To quote a [letter](#) from the CT Examiner this week, "Artificial Turf Fields? It's Personal" In doing some climate oriented work last year, artificial turf kept coming up. I started to go to webinars with scientists and read up on the subject. I had followed the Dupont teflon scandal and exposés. I had noticed the PFOA scandal with plastic water bottles and was suspicious when everything was suddenly PFOA free. I had not put it all together until I listened to the scientists. These chemicals are all related as a class of chemicals. Yet, they have rarely been regulated and when they have it has been one by one. And when individual chemicals are regulated, industry tweaks something in the chemical makeup and creates a new one, so now that new one is unregulated and free to be used. There are now somewhere between 12000-14000 PFAS chemicals. No one is sure exactly how many and the number continues to grow. This is why many scientists now want them to be regulated as a class.

I came of age during a time when "*Better living through chemistry*" and "*the future is plastics*" were the slogans of the day. No one thought of any unintended consequences...

When I was in HS, I was mystified and horrified when one by one, mothers of my friends started dying from breast cancer. There was a cluster of cancer in my neighborhood. Some of us originally thought we were immune to it because our houses were uphill from what then became known as a superfund site. Then my sister's best friend who lived two doors away, died of childhood bone marrow cancer before she was nine. Fast forward, and my mother fought cancer five times and didn't make it on that fifth one. I too had a lumpectomy and have been told I am at high future risk. And so are most of my friends. I can count only a few friends who have not had some form of cancer. Instead of meeting for lunch at a restaurant it has become frequent to meet for lunch instead at the MGH cafeteria. I have lost too many friends from cancer, including one a week ago.

Definition of a superfund site: locations polluted with hazardous materials and waste.

There were heavy metals and all kinds of other toxins in that superfund site. And I now know there are also PFAS chemicals there, too, just as in artificial turf. And some 50 plus years later, that site is still in litigation after many proposed projects from housing to an amazon warehouse have been cancelled because of continuing cleanup, safety and liability issues.

Artificial turf fields are creating toxic sites as well as leaching materials into the air, land and water.. Those of us working on the moratorium have sent you materials and articles about the current science. Artificial turf has multiple toxins including heavy metals, pfas, microplastics. New research comes out daily, for example, last week articles about how some of these chemicals breach the

blood brain barrier within two hours. Remember, there are no safe levels of PFAS and no safe levels of lead among other toxins.

In 2015 the girl's soccer team in Washington State had a cluster of cancer cases among goalies, recently the Philly's reported a cluster of rare brain cancers among ball players. Examples like this continue to come up. It is clear to me that PFAS and artificial turf are the new asbestos, the new tobacco, the new climate science denial. It seems we have not yet learned lessons from these examples.

Why would we, in Arlington, ban plastic bags, ban plastic water bottles, endorse a new campaign to outlaw plastics, create new energy plans to get off fossil fuels only to install a plastic field that is 40,000 lbs of plastic carpet, the equivalence of 2-4 million plastic bags just in the top layer of artificial turf alone?

To quote but take some liberties from that CT letter again, to make it more relatable to Arlington:

"I [am] disappointed and puzzled. Why are my friends and [colleagues], all fervent advocates for addressing the climate crisis on the one hand, voting for removing green space and replacing it with plastic fields on the other hand? How can we as part of the leadership in [our town] promote new Initiatives banning plastics to Combat Global Warming while signing off at the same time on yet another heat island in [a town] already lacking sufficient green space? Why [am] I compelled, [as] a member of [Arlington Town Meeting], to help formulate, discuss and pass a policy that would [place a temporary moratorium on artificial turf fields, when my compatriots don't see the urgency [or the dangers]? Maybe it's my lived experience. Maybe my personal story can sway some of [your] opinions."

I ask you for a YES vote to support the Melofchik Substitute Motion and a NO vote on the other motion and amendments.

Robin Bergman
Town Meeting Member, Precinct 12